

Henry Riddell to George Washington, February 24, 1774, Letters to Washington and Accompanying Papers. Published by the Society of the Colonial Dames of America. Edited by Stanislaus Murray Hamilton.

FROM MR. HENRY RIDDELL.

PISCATAWAY 24th. February 1774

SIR

I was unluckily from home, when Mr. Young brought your Letter of the 22d.¹ to this place, otherwise an answer would have been sent you by him.

When Mr. Young mentioned in conversation your desire of importing Palatines to settle your Lands on the Ohio, the remembrance of Capt. Hyndmans having refused to accept a freight of 500 of these People, produced in me a thought, that perhaps through the channell of our Companys Agent at Rotterdam, the number you want might be procured; and as our Ships frequently came from thence to this Country, the importing them might be of advantage to both of us—This reflexion induced me to acquaint you by Mr. Young, that a trial of this kind could be made, which if agreeable to you, I would do my utmost to make successfull. But here it is necessary to inform you that my only view of profit in this Scheme, is from the freight—I have no other—I would propose, that you should be charged with the money advanced for procuring the Palantines—if imported at your expense, and to be liable for Interest on that money till paid—also to be accountable for the freight when the People are landed here, which is customary.

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With regard to the success of this Scheme I can give you no certainty—The Capt. who refused the freight, above mentioned, told me, that the German Princes whose Territorys lie upon the Rhine, had prohibited their Subjects from emigrating to America, but that the People get away privately, come down the Rhine in famillys, and land at Rotterdam, where they wait for Shipping—The 500 Palatines or Germans offered him were such People as above described—they had money sufficient to bring them here, and offered two Guineas per Poll freight, they to lay in their own Provisions—A Ship bound to Philadelphia accepted the offer.

The only way I can point out for making a trial of this kind, is; for you to write a Letter of Instruction, in which can be inserted the terms on which you would chuse to contract with Germans—the Provision you have in view for them, and any other things which may tend to bend the minds of these People to a settlement in Virginia, and also to point out the distinction in making contracts with those who may have money sufficient to bear their charges—and those who may not. This Letter of Instruction I would forward immediately, that means may be used to engage the People, before the Ships arrival at Rotterdam, and if the Plan succeeds, I will agree to transport them to this Country for Two Pounds Sterling per Poll, you to be at the expense of laying in their Provisions and Stores, we to find them Ship room, and to land them either at your Landing, or at Alexandria.

I can certainly say that some of our Companys Ships will go to Rotterdam this ensuing Summer, and it is probable this will be the destination of the Ship to load at the Mouth of Piscataway Creek, if so, her arrival in this Country from thence, may be in August or September; But I cannot with precision say, what the Germans may cost you landed here.—For my own part I am unacquainted with the Business, any farther than the information which Capt. Hyndman gave me last Summer—from what he said, I conjecture that the Germans imported into this Country lately, have paid their own Charges, but how they are provided for, or dispose of themselves after being imported, is what I am intirely ignorant of, however this I could know by writing to Philadelphia.

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It would give me pleasure to be of service to you, in this importation And I am

SirYour very hble Servt HENRY RIDDELL

1 This letter, incompletely published in the Writings of Washington and in Mr. W. C. Ford's Washington as an Employer and Importer of Labor, is bound with the manuscript letters to Washington. MOUNT VERNON Feby 22d. 1774 — SIR Mr Young, hearing me express a desire of Importing Palatines to Settle on my Lands on the Ohio, tells me, that, in discoursing of this matter in your Company, you suggested an expedient which might, probably, be attended with Success; and if I Inclined to Adopt it, wish'd to be inform'd before the sailing of your Ship. — The desire of seating and Improving of my Lands on the Ohio is founded on interested, as well as Political Views; but the intention of importing Palantines for this Purpose, was more the effect of sudden, and undigested thought than mature Consideration; because I am totally unacquainted with the manner, as well as expence of doing it; and was led into the notion, principally, from a report of either this or some other Ship of your's, being blamed for not taking an offerd freight of these Germans at Forty Shillings Sterling—This induced me to think if this Charge was not much Accumulated by other Expences, that I could fall upon no better expedient to Settle my lands with Industrious People, than by such an Importation. The Terms upon which I have thought of Importing Palatines, or People from Ireland, or Scotland (both of which have been Recommended to me) are these — To Import them at my expence, when they are unable to transport themselves at their own, into this River, and from hence to the Ohio. To have them in the first case engaged to me under Indenture; In the second, by some other Contract equally valid, to become Tenants upon the Terms hereafter mentioned; as without these Securities, I would not encounter the Expence, trouble, and hazard of such an Importation. but To make Matters as easy, and as agreeable as Possible to these Emigrants, I will engage on my part, that these Indentures shall be considered in no Other light than as a Security for Reimbursing me every Expence I am run to (with Interest) in importing them.—Removing them to the Land—& supporting them there, till they can raise a Crop for their own Subsistence. Giving up the said Indentures, and considering them altogether as freemen and Tenants, so soon as this shall happen; not to each person or Family Respectively, but when the whole Accumulated Expence is discharged; as I must for my own Safty, consider them as jointly bound to this payment till the Expiration of the Indented Terms, Otherwise I must be an inevitable looser by every death, and other Accident; whilst they cannot (in the worst light) be consider'd as more than Servants at Large, during the Indented term. I can also engage to set them down upon as good Land as any in that Country; and where there is neither house built, nor Land clear'd, will allow them an Exemption of Rent four Years; and where there is a house Erected, and five Acres of Land clear d and fit for Cultivation two Years. — I will also engage the Land to them upon lease for Twenty one Years under the usual Covenants; and also at an annual Rent (after the first becomes due) of Four pounds Sterling for each Hundred Acres; allowing each Family to take more or less as Inclination or convenience may Prompt them.—And I will moreover engage to Renew the leases at the Expiration of the above Twenty one years: and in like manner at the end of every Seven Afterwards, upon an Increased Rent to be agreed on between the Landlord and tenant; or, in order to fix the matter absolutely if this shall be more Agreeable, the Rent may be Increasd at these periods in Proportion to the increased Value of that, or the adjoining Lands, possessed of equal advantages of Soil and Situation. — These are the Terms on which I thought to Import, and Plant People on my Ohio Lands, which are for the Quantity, equal if not Superior to any in that Country; laying altogether upon the Ohio or Great Kanhawa; two fine Inland Navigable Rivers (Resembling the Rhine in Germany) and abound in Fish and Wild fowl of all sorts, as the Lands do in wild Meats of the best kinds. From Alexandria to the Navigable Waters of Ohio along a much frequented road used by Waggon's, is, according to the Computed distance 200 Miles.—this Land Carriage if the Inland Navigation of Potomack should

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be effected, than which I think nothing easier, will be reduced to sixty miles as matters now stand; some say 40; and Others are of Opinion to twenty Miles; but call it the greater distance, any Commodity made upon any part of these Lands (of mine) may be transported along a very easy water Communication to the Settlement of Red-Stone where the Land Carriage at this time begins; To say Nothing therefore of the Advantages of raising stock of all kinds, and Horses, which will carry themselves to Market, and are now and will, from the Nature of things Continue to be in great demand in the Interior parts of this Great Continent; Hemp, Flax, Pott ash, Indigo &ca. &ca. will well afford the Expence of this Land Carriage (admitting it never is reduced) and can be Cultivated to Great Advantage on the River bottom's in that Country, as most, indeed all, of these Lands of mine Consist. — Having thus exhibited a general View of my design, I shall now be obliged to you Sir, to Inform me with as much Precision as you can what certainty there is of your ship's gowing to Holland? what probable certainty there is of its getting Palatines if it does go there? when they might be expected in this Country? What would be the freight; and, as near as you can judge the whole Incident Expence attending each Person deliverd at Alexandria? And Moreover whether it would be expected that the whole of these Charges (Including freight) should be paid down upon the Arrival of the Ship here, as it must Appear rather hard, to make a Certain Provision for an uncertain Event. — I was near forgetting to observe that, I should not choose to be Incumberd with a great Number of small people (Children) because they would add greatly to my trouble and Expence, at the same time that they contributed nothing to my design.—I do not however by this mean to be Totally exempt from them; but in case of choice, to avoid those Families which have too many of the small fry in them.—It may not be amiss further to observe, that, I see no prospect of these People being restrained in the smallest degree either in their Civil, or Religious Principles; which I take notice of, because these are Priviledges which Mankind are sollicitous to enjoy, and Emigrants must be Anxious to know. — I had wrote to Philadelphia by the last post (previous to the receipt of your Message) for full information of the manner and Charges of Importing these People from Holland.—And if your Account in Answer to this Letter should prove Agreeable to my wishes; I could send a more descriptive Account of the Lands, I want to Settle, as well as Copies of the plots and do any other matter or thing which might be judged necessary to further the design. — And am Sir Yr Most Hble Servt. GO: WASHINGTON

2 Washington's draft of a reply to Mr. Riddell is bound with the manuscript letters to Washington. MOUNT VERNON March 2st. 2774. SIR, On Sunday afternoon, your favour of the 24th. Ult. came to my hands—as you profess to know but little of the expence attending the Importation of Palatines, and as it is being a business I have not the least knowledge of am totally ignorant of myself I am affraid to plange into it without further consideration & advice and therefore, must lay aside my Scheme at least either altogether or in part for the present; But as I gave have already given you a general view of my Scheme to wch. I beg leave to refer, Plan in my last letter I would first have leave to first ask whether, it would be worth while for is of Importance enough to any of your Ships coming from Rotterdam hence, to take in a freight of about 80 or an hundred of these Germans provided that number of Men, or men & their Wives can with not more than one child to a Family, could be had under the usual Indenture? If this could be done I would, at all events make tryal of that number & kind; but would not do not incline to encounter the Inconvenience & expence of Families encumbered with many Children which will as these will would only serve to enhance add to My expences without contributing to My design.— I will either consider these People as my property during the Indented term, affording them the] reasonable a reasonable & necessary support & maintenance support & receive the fruits of their labour during the Stipulated Servitude Or, if they will be jointly bound for each other and let their Indentures remain as security (weh is all the only [?] security the nature of the case will admit of) for performance thereof that all the expence I am put to in Importing, Planting, & supporting them on the Land, till they can raise a Crop for themselves, shall be repaid me with Interest, they may be considered as free People, & appropriate the fruits of their labour (having regard to my advances disbursements) in any manner they please.—In the latter case, they must be considered from the first, as Tenants, upon the terms mentiond in my last—. In the first they case they will go to the Land under the favourable Circumstances, and assurance of becoming Tenants at the expiration of their Indented term, upon the

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very farms they have been made so that in Fact, they ultimately reap the benefit of their own labour, bestowed at my expence in during their Servitude.—thus much for the Indented People.—as to those who are able & wish to pay desirous of paying the expence of their own Passages, I can be under no Ingagement to them unless it be a reciprocal; one that is, I will encounter no expence or engage in no any promise to them if they are left at large with me; but if they are able by themselves although I could undertake upon their engaging to become Tenants to me upon the Terms mentioned in my last, I could undertake to provide them in good Land in the Neighbourhood of the other's; so as that they may might form an entire Settlement of their own, as I suppose there is being Land enough (belonging to me) to afford comfortable farms for 300 Families. — If you think you can supply me with this number of Palatines of these kinds, & upon these terms, I should be glad to know it between this and Saturday; as I shall then undertake a journey, from which I shall not be returnd till the 20th. of March; and if in whatever manner you think a more formal proposition or declaration of my intention (than is contained in this & my former Letter) neceasary and will should be made please to point it out the mode & necessary address in it & to whom it is to be addressed & I will endeavour to do it.—In the meanwhile, I have to thank you sir for yr. obliging offers to serve me in this matter, & to assure you that I am, Yr. Most Obedt. Hble Servt, GO. WASHINGTON